

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 NEA-11 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1248
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ICRC, AG, MO, MR
SUBJECT: ICRC RELATIONS WITH POLISARIO

REF: GENEVA 9084

1. IN CONVERSATION TODAY, INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) OFFICIAL TOLD MISOFF THAT POLISARIO HAD ISSUED COUNTER-COMMUNIQUE TO THAT REPORTED REFTTEL, WHICH ASSERTED THAT POLISARIO STOOD READY, AS IN PAST, TO PERMIT ICRC TO HAVE ACCESS TO PRISONERS IN ITS HANDS AT ANY TIME. ICRC PROPOSES TO FOLLOW UP THIS ASSERTION WITH POLISARIO AND TO PROGRAM VISITS AT EARLIEST FEASIBLE DATE THAT CAN BE MUTUALLY AGREED UPON.

2. ICRC REP STATED THAT MAJOR DIFFICULTY WOULD PROBABLY BE REVELATION THAT NUMBERS OF PRISONERS ACTUALLY IN POLISARIO HANDS WOULD NOT NEARLY COME UP TO EARLIER CLAIMS. HE SAID THAT WHILE NO CUMULATIVE FIGURE HAD EVER
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BEEN ANNOUNCED, INDIVIDUAL COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE POLISARIO AFTER FIGHTING INCIDENTS ADDED UP TO SOME 18,000 CLAIMED PRISONERS. IN FACT, HOWEVER, ICRC JUDGED THAT POLISARIO HELD NOT MORE THAN 400 TO 500 PRISONERS. PERHAPS FOR THIS REASON, HE SAID, POLISARIO CONTACTS HAVE INDICATED THAT VISITS TO PRISONERS WOULD BE CONDUCTED AT VARIOUS TIMES AND IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. WHEN ICRC WAS

LAST PERMITTED TO VISIT PRISONERS OF THE POLISARIO IN THE FALL OF 1976, IT SAW TWO GROUPS, ONE OF FOUR OR FIVE, THE OTHER ABOUT FIFTY.

3. NEGOTIATIONS ON THE SUBJECT ARE CONTINUING, AND THE ICRC IS HOPEFUL THAT, ALTHOUGH CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE VISITATIONS ARE GRANTED MAY NOT BE WHOLLY SATISFACTORY FROM THE ICRC VIEWPOINT, AN OPENING MAY AT LEAST BE PROVIDED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE CONTACTS WITH THE POLISARIO FRONT. SORENSON

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